

From Cradle to Grave

cradle for any length of time and could experience the exploratory pleasures of crawling about. From this time on, when the child was not on the board or scrambling about on the ground, it was carried on its mother's back. 854 [482]

A child on its mother's back seemed perfectly comfortable and at home. It ate when the mother passed food to it over her shoulder, surveyed the new, curious surroundings, or slept as its mother moved. When moving camp or when traveling, mothers carried the babies on their backs, or sometimes they hung the boards on saddles or travois poles. As a child became too large to be carried by an overworked woman, it was generally placed on travois poles pulled by a steady old pack horse. In this manner children were usually carried until they were old enough to ride upon a pack or a horse—lashed to the saddle or held in place before the mother.

The Comanches had no surnames. At first, children were likely to be called only by pet names. Formal or real names were always bestowed, but there was no set time for doing so. Personal names were not distinctive of sex. The father might name his child, but more commonly he invited a person of distinction to do so. A child named by a medicine man or a medicine woman was supposed to have a longer and more useful life. The naming took place in a public ceremony, which was considered better performed inside a tipi. The medicine man lighted his pipe with a coal from the fire, and blowing puffs of smoke to heaven, earth, and the four directions, offered a prayer for the welfare of the child. When the prayer was finished, he lifted the child aloft to symbolize the wish that it would grow up, and addressing the parents and others present, said, "His [her] name is going to be ____." It was customary to lift the child four times, a little higher each time. The godfather was either compensated on the spot or told that the child would give him something later. If the child proved sickly, it would usually be given a new name, for the Comanches believed that names were closely associated with individual constitutions and that a sickly or puny child could be made strong with a strong name memorializing the great deed of a brave warrior. He Runs Directly Against The Enemy was a sickly infant who was taken to a famous warrior for a new name. It cured him, according to Greyfoot. A name commemorating a false deed was 553 • [55] 753 551

The Comanches

753 injurious to the child or its family, however. Post Oak Jim was given
551 one of these at first.

He was taken by his mother and father to a warrior for his first name. Later he became restless and cried all night, until at last his parents took him to another brave to find out what was wrong.

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539 " " " "That deed was false," he told them. "That fellow has no real war deeds. He can't do anything."

Then they circled his tipi and asked him for a new name for me. "Come back in the morning," he directed them. "I cannot give it at this time of day."

In the morning my grandmother took me down before sunrise.

"Do not enter my tipi," the warrior called out. "Stay out there and look at the rising sun." He was fixing himself in his war regalia. Just as the sun arose, he came out with his spear in hand. He walked south and east of the tipi and stood facing the newly risen sun.

"You, Sun," he cried, "you cannot harm me. This thing I did was true. You, Earth, have seen me. The Big Bird [Eagle] has seen me. You cannot dispute my word. On the war path we saw the enemy on a hill. We charged and my companions outran me, for I was a poor man and my horse was slow. I was the last to come up to the battle place. My friends were doing nothing. They just sat there. I asked them what was the matter. They said the enemies on the hill were too strong for them to attack them. I went right in and charged them. I killed a man with a spear. We went home and had a Victory Dance."

He turned and came back to where my grandmother was holding me in her arms.

"His name is going to be *ɔβɔyβita*—Group of Men Standing On A Hill," he said.³ » » »

551 There was a tendency for formal names to belong to a family as a sort of property. Names might be derived from some closely connected circumstance, event, or happening, trivial or otherwise; or they might reflect some experience of the godparent. The male child might be called by some term expressive of the pride or affection of

³ Informant: Post Oak Jim.

128 a brief ethnographic account of the old naming customs will first be given.

● 553 6.1. Comanche personal names were bestowed in a variety of ways and frequently in rather casual fashion. In rather sharp contrast to our practice, a person could in his lifetime successively bear several different names, or be known by several different sobriquets at any one given time. Little distinction was made between male and female names, although some plainly did refer to male or female characteristics. Women's names, however, tended to be more permanent.

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While almost from birth an infant could be called by a pet name or nickname which was often kept until adolescence, a child could also simply be called by the word for boy, *pihia?*, or girl, *nai?A*. It was not uncommon for a person to be called by a status term designating age and sex, or by a kinship term, in lieu of his personal name. However, a youngster would usually receive a given name in early childhood, although one informant stated that he was not given such a name until he was ten years old. A child's parents in modest ceremony would customarily call in an elder or two to relate stories and choose as a name some word descriptive of an incident or character in the tale. A name could also come from some incident in a person's life which subsequently came to be associated with him.

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In some instances a child was named after a parent, relative or other person, but because of the taboo against using the name of a dead person, only if he or she was still alive. Or, alternatively, a boy could, in familiar European fashion, be called "son of so and so". Only in the latter case was there anything comparable to the use of paternal surnames.

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Nicknames derived from physical peculiarities or temperamental idiosyncrasies were frequently bestowed and could be given at almost any point in the life cycle from babyhood on. In line with the inst

553 ritualized joking relationship, such nick-
551 names were usually given by an in-law,
602 and more frequently than not were derogatory or had some sexual or obscene reference.

553 A young man would often receive a new name after he had proven himself on his first war party. Or, a young warrior, who aspired to the name of an old man who had been a famous warrior, could ask permission of the oldster to become his namesake. The old man might then put the youth to the test of equalling a feat well remembered by the people. If the youth met the test, the old man would be compelled to give up his illustrious name and use a former one.

533 In earlier times names along with other
787 gifts were bestowed through visitations by
776 supernatural spirits who were sought out
[178] by fasting and dreaming in secluded places. This practice, however, seems to have been in eclipse as early as 1870, although many older Comanche still bear names given them by their guardian spirits. Thus, Comanche names may be characterized as varied and highly individual, a fact which reflects Comanche emphasis on the worth and variety of the individual personality.

551 6.2. By a study of the 2394 Comanche
177 names on the January 1940 census rolls
[161] one may trace, from the older through the younger generations, the adoption of the White system of patronymics and the consequent displacement of the native naming patterns described above. This shift was accomplished largely within the past seventy-odd years dating from the early reservation period. Rollcalls, the taking of vital statistics and census data, intermarriage with Whites, rationing, attendance at schools and churches, orthodox baptisms, trading, and the casual bestowal of personal names by the Whites were all factors instrumental in the change.

551 Although the rolls were called every three
177 days, the men by name and the women and
657 children by count, as early as 1875, the first formal census was taken in 1890 and names of Indians "had to be definitely decided

[p. 244-A]

551 practices can be noted in the list of Comanche names. First, there are 175 individuals listed on the rolls by Comanche given names only. Thus, Tahkony, ta?koni? *one who heads something off*, a man of 72, is married to Ni he vah, naiviwá? *one with no beauty*, 73. Of these 175 persons,¹⁴⁸ 107 are women with an average age of 67.9 years and an age range of 44-103 years; 68 are men with an average age of 63.9 and a range of 41-85 years. The average age for both men and women is 66.3 years. Fourteen of the men have alternative Christian given names or given names and a surname after the father. Tooahnipah, tuini?pi? *young man*, 57, also has the name Wilson Simmons; Mahvochuky, mavicu?ki? *one who rubs with the flat of the hand*, a man of 50, is also known as Wylie Yellowfish after his father. Which of these alternative names is preferred by either Indians or Whites differs from case to case. A few women also have additional names. Ukapitty, ?i?kivetí? *new daughter*, a woman of 56, has the alternative name Yellowback, which belonged to her father. It is probable that more persons have such supplementary names, especially first names by which they are known to Whites, but these do not appear on the agency rolls. Conversely, a great many younger people also have Comanche names though they are seldom used and are not recorded.

The names of a considerable number of women, as they are given on the census list, reflect the process of change in some detail. Nellie Tis so yo, tísóyó? *one who has confidence in someone else*, 59, is the married name of Wuth take wabbitty, wíhtikwavi?tí? *arrives and strikes*. This is probably one of the earliest instances of a woman officially assuming the name of her husband at marriage, although among her friends and relatives, as is often the case, she is known by her own Comanche name. Josie Tanishoti, tanísutai? *one who is loved*, is the married name of a woman of 47. Her maiden name

¹⁴⁸ Females constitute 51.5% of the 1940 Comanche population of 2394.

SSI Lookingglass may be cited. Among the Indians themselves the Comanche form is usually in more common usage.

The length in translation of many of the names, their common sexual reference, and their frequent unflattering or cryptic meanings would tend to preclude translation in a good many instances. Geanell Yokesuite, *yoksuwaiti one who attempts to have intercourse*; Strudwick Tahsequaw, *tasikwana? vagina smell*; Ella Nahdoonipah, *na? ruinihpi? only boy in the family*; Julia Monoessy, *moná'si? son-in-law*; Rachel Noyobad, *noyowahti no testicles*; Kenneth Milton Sapkat, *sapkatI has a belly*; Delpha Zoe Topetchy, *topehci? after ... he ...*; Peggy Ann Keihtahroco, *kihtaruhku? one with hard flesh*; Rita Jane Wauahdooh, *wo'arua? wormy young one*; and Randlett Pahkekumab, *pahkikima? edge of an old dry hide*, are names that could hardly stand translation. Due also to the new morality a few possessors of more outspoken Comanche names have altered them to convey a blander meaning and these nicer forms are used in addressing them. Connywerdy, originally, *ka'nawia? one with a slender penis*, was changed to *kahnawí?ri? tall and slender one*; Ahah, a woman of 70, whose name comes from *?a'h*, the baby word for feces or something nasty, and is pronounced

[p, 246-C]

CA-VO-YO, GIVER OF NAMES

I NEVER KNEW but one of the old Comanches that carried the distinction of being a Name-Giver. He was Ca-vo-yo. When the Comanche roll was made out, soon after the surrender in 1876, he was given the birth year of 1840. That only meant the government clerk figured he looked to be thirty-six years old. I remember that when I finally sorted him out as an individual, I judged him to be about the age of my father, a Civil War veteran crowding seventy.

I must have seen Ca-vo-yo first in March, 1902, but then he was one of a large number of older Comanches, whom I termed, for my own convenience, the "old fellows." That meant to me that they were old enough to have been warriors who probably had fought at the battle of Adobe Walls and been present when the surrender took place at Fort Sill.

In due time most of the old fellows became individuals to me. I learned their names, where their camps were located, the number of wives each had, if any, and their dispositions toward the white man; and being a trader's son, I learned of their bill-paying reliability, in the event credit was extended to them between Grass Money payments. If a trader extended credit, he needed to know all the wives by name and keep a record of what each wife purchased, though he charged the total bill to the husband.

57 Ca-vo-yo, who was one of the first of the old chaps to become an individual to me, was such a friendly, kindly old fellow that it was hard for me to picture him riding into battle, screaming his war cry. But by the agency's record he must have been a successful and respected warrior for approximately twenty years. Had he not been a successful warrior, none would have sought him out to name their man-child and give of his medicine.

778 I have tried a number of times to write Ca-vo-yo's story as a giver of names, but the trouble always is that scarcely have you begun to write about the giving of a name, when you run into *Pa-haw-cut*, the Comanche name for medicine. And it is hard to tell a white audience about Comanche medicine, because the white man has nothing through which he can identify with the Comanche's feeling about it. I thought at one time of creating a straw man by combining an individual who by faith had a guardian angel with one who believed his destiny was directed by the stars and their positions, and then to this composite individual adding one who believed in luck—one who would not leave his home for the office of a morning without his good luck charm. Then I decided that the faith of even such an individual would still fall far short of a Comanche's faith in his medicine.

[555] When a Comanche warrior was bragging, to an audience gathered around a campfire, of some mighty coup he had brought about, he was not bragging of a personal exploit—he was telling about the strength of his medicine. From the earliest war games he played as a boy, throughout his active adult life, he was constantly training himself to be ever a better warrior. It was his way of life. Also, he sought to perfect himself in the making of arms, both for war and for the hunt. Each warrior furnished his own arms. We have a written history, more or less, for the last 175 years of Comanche warfare, which shows that the Comanche possessed neither an armory nor a commissary.

492 Just as he had one set of arrows for war and another set of ar-
411 rows he used in the killing of the buffalo, so the Comanche had horses
224 trained for war and horses trained to carry him alongside the buffalo,
778 so he could loose an arrow into the rib cage of his huge quarry. But
726 it was his individual *Pa-haw-cut*, or medicine, that allowed him to
492 count coup early and often in the battle—that caused his horse to
778 carry him at full speed into battle and to carry him away in a stra-
778 tegic retreat. The same medicine allowed his horse to place him beside

CA-VO-YO, GIVER OF NAMES

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the stampeding buffalo without stepping into a grass-covered badger 778
or prairie-dog hole. 492
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It was his medicine that enabled him to crawl into a cavalry biv-
ouac and sever the eight-foot rope that each soldier had tied to his 778
wrist, so his horse might graze safely during the night, and without 726
waking the sleeper or his comrades lead the horse away.

It was his medicine that caused his wives to be friendly and con- 778
genial, one with the other. It resulted in the wives' caring for his 595
camp, looking after his surplus horses, and bearing mostly boy babies. 842
For none of these things did he take credit personally. But he was
justly proud of his medicine that had brought all these things about,
and he guarded it like a jealous lover.

To sum up the attributes of a name-giver: he needed a keen ear 553
and an extensive knowledge of the vocabulary—perhaps a sense of 778
humor helped—and he must have a successful reputation as a warrior- 701
hunter and a willingness to share his medicine. Custom required him 555
to give each individual named a supply of his medicine. Warriors
often refused to give a name because it meant parting with a portion
of their medicine. They feared the remainder might prove inade-
quate. Apparently the true name-giver's supply had a similarity to
the oil in the cruse and the meal in the barrel of the widow at Zare-
path, while she fed the fugitive Elijah. It was replenished as used.

My reading indicates that the Comanche placed more emphasis [171]
or dependence on the name than did any of the other Plains tribes.
A warrior might carry a number of names, should he live a long and 551
successful life. In the event a boy developed into a sickly youngster,
or was accident-prone, his parents were apt to seek out one reputed
to have even stronger medicine than the one who gave him the first
name and ask for another name. Directly after puberty when a 881
youth went alone to fast and pray for a vision, should his vision have 787
particular significance, he would be given a name in keeping with the
vision. But no Comanche dared name himself.

After his acceptance as a warrior, should he develop outstanding 553
characteristics in methods, strategy, or bravery, he might be given yet 701
another name, descriptive of his accomplishments. For example, there 551
was the Mexican captive Mo-cho-rook, about whom I tell in another
chapter. Raised and trained as a Comanche warrior, he was given
this name because "he so cruel, he makes Comanche blood run cold."
He became a legend while yet he lived.

● 553 Little significance attached to a girl's name. Often she was given
562^a pet name by her mother at birth and probably not given a real
name for several years. Once named, she carried that name for the
rest of her life, even after her marriage.

115 Much of my information concerning Ca-vo-yo and name-giving
came from Charley Ross, who in turn had received much of his in-
formation from his father, To-wa, and his father-in-law, Mi-he-suah,
whom we called Mi-so. They and Ca-vo-yo were approximately the
726 same age, and the three had been young warriors together. Mi-so was
wounded during the first charge at Adobe Walls. With a buffalo-gun
slug in his abdomen he lay all day quite near the Walls without mov-
ing, knowing that should the defenders detect any movement they
would finish the job. He was rescued near evening by two mounted
warriors, who, riding at full speed, picked him up, laid him across
the horse in front of one of the riders, and rode out of range without
being hit.

552 Once Charley told me of a service Ca-vo-yo rendered the older
177 Indians who knew no English. I think I remember it almost word for
word, and so I will give it as a quotation. "When the white man
came to live among the Comanches, here in Comanche land, he
brought many things and customs the older Indians had never seen
and knew nothing about. The old men went to Ca-vo-yo, and he gave
them a Comanche name for each such article and custom. The words
he gave them had a particular significance for the article or customs
and were easily remembered."

Then Charley gave a little laugh, a sort of chuckle, and went on,
"Many old Indians had never seen a completely bald man until they
saw your father, so he gave him the name Ka-hait-ze Paph. *Ka-hait-ze*
is 'without'; *paph* means 'hair' or 'head.'"

000 I carry three vivid mental images of Ca-vo-yo. One is really a
342 composite image. He lived in a little T-shaped box house that sits on
the east bank of West Cache Creek, right where Blue Beaver Creek
609 adds itself to the larger stream. Soon the white people who lived to
the east of the creek wanted another ford. They wanted a single ford
to take the place of the fords across each creek, a mile upstream. So
Ca-vo-yo allowed them to construct a ford just back of his house
and only feet below the junction of the two creeks. To use this new
ford you had to open and close two gates, as you let yourself through
his horse corral.